

# Record of Interview



Special Inspector General for  
Afghanistan Reconstruction

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SIGAR LL-02: Lessons Learned from Aid Coordination in Afghanistan				
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Washington, DC				
<b>Purpose:</b>				
To solicit views on donor coordination, especially in early years				
<b>Interviewees:</b>				
<b>SIGAR Attendees:</b>				
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<b>Key Topics:</b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Objectives and theories of development</li> <li>• Bush administration on reconstruction</li> <li>• Development agenda</li> <li>• US engagement of other donors/GIRoA</li> <li>• Lead nation system, UN role and leadership</li> <li>• Small US footprint</li> <li>• Political and security priorities</li> <li>• Accelerating Success initiative</li> </ul>				

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## Summary

Interviewee stressed repeatedly the need for the USG to define clear objectives for development and reconstruction, and to have a theory of how development meets those objectives -- even positing that there's confusion about what "development" means. He implied that the USG did not have any clear objectives for reconstruction assistance to Afghanistan during his tenure (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C), and that USAID did not have a strategy. His observations supported the notion that development goals fell behind political and security goals, but that the Bush administration fairly quickly evolved to see the importance of reconstruction. On coordination, he pointed to the US and UN as the central players, with limited capacity within the Afghan government. He highlighted success in the constitution, elections, and reform of security institutions, but admitted that reconstruction never had the same level of coordination, in part due to lack of clear objectives. He noted that USG contracting requirements were a "huge problem" and Afghans didn't have the capacity to meet them.

## Objectives and theories of development

We [USG] should be asking these questions first:

- 1) what are our objectives?
- 2) what is our theory of how to achieve our objectives?
- 3) what are the resources?
- 4) what is the division of labor?
- 5) should we have done what we did? i.e., measuring success.

Did USAID have a *theory* of what it was doing? When military does COIN, they have a theory. When we're doing reconstruction, what is our theory and objectives? Also, what are you measuring? In some ways you can measure: number schools built, cost overrun, etc. But the bigger issue is, what is development? What do we want to achieve? An important contribution you could make is to unmask what should our theory of development be [in a country/environment like Afghanistan]? We need a theory, instead of just sending someone like me and saying, go help President Karzai.

## Bush Administration on Reconstruction/State-building

In terms of the Bush administration's views and objectives on long-term reconstruction, it evolved. We had to do something in response. Initially it was all about bringing the perpetrators to justice - al Qaeda. There was not much interest in Bush's campaign on nation-building - they weren't happy with Clinton's policies in the Balkans and Somalia, especially using military forces. But over a period of time - and I mean weeks, not months - Bush's position evolved. We made a mistake in the 80s, when we helped Afghans fight the Soviets then once Soviets were gone, forgot about the Afghans. This time we wanted to help not just politically and militarily, but economically - there was even talk of a Marshall Plan for Afghanistan. Powell was very supportive; Rumsfeld came to it later. (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)

Afghanistan became front and center in the interagency. There was an evolution of bringing perpetrators to justice, to making Afghanistan successful so it's not a terrorist haven again. The President and others viewed us as there to solve 9/11, not to solve their [Afghans'] problems. (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) we can't solve our problem without helping to solve theirs. DoD took a long time [to come around to doing reconstruction] because they didn't want to be drawn into state-building.

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It's easier to say, we want to overthrow the Taliban - a clear objective.

(b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)

## Development agenda

As for the donors agreeing to a development agenda with GIRoA, who would have negotiated that? Karzai would say, what I needed most from the US was to build roads. (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) Administrator Andrew] Natsios - he said we don't do roads. (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) USAID built roads in Afghanistan in the 1950s. Natsios said we don't anymore, now we've become a contracting agency. (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)

What's your *objective* on the economic side? We had committed resources and money for so many schools, kilometers of roads, etc. But to a large extent this was driven by what resources we got.

(b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)

(b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)

(b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) There is the perception that reconstruction assistance declined for a period - then picked up at end of Bush's second term.

## US engagement of other donors, GIRoA

A lot of good will existed toward the US after 9/11 - everyone wanted to help. Two things came out of that:

- 1) Bonn - there should be international force in Kabul but not in rest of the country. (But the rest of the country said why not here too?) IC made contributions toward the force.
- 2) IC also contributed on reconstruction & humanitarian assistance. There were country leads, i.e. Japan on DDR, Italy on rule of law, Germans on police, etc.

The Afghan government was very nascent and weak, not a lot of capability to bring to the table. Given the weakness of institutions and culture of some [foreign aid] organizations - like the contracting practices of USAID - the Afghan govt just didn't have the capacity to fulfill all the contracting requirements. The culture of contracts and subcontracts was a *huge* problem because people couldn't get to provinces; they relied on contractors to tell them something had been done or not. I'd say has it been built? They say, we have this report that says so...

## Lead nation system; UN role

You need to have a good coordination system and avoid silos. UN has developed a mechanism called peace-making - they take responsibility for peace-making and this gives the UN the lead to coordinate. The US in effect with the UN played that lead role.

If the UN is with you, it protects you. Rather than the US pushing people around and saying come to my embassy. The UN can provide political support, with 1 nation providing the muscle. The right

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coordinating mechanism also depends on the case. Maybe no nation wants to lead. Some nations didn't want to be there for Afghanistan, but to be responsive to the US.

## Small US footprint

The small footprint idea, it was us thinking, keep casualties low, also to not create the impression of an occupation - a lesson learned from the Soviets. Having Afghans in the lead. We didn't want to do an Occupational Authority as in Iraq because we wanted to get the [Afghan] government up and running.

Incorrectly it turns out - I thought Afghans don't like foreigners telling them what to do. But when I traveled across Afghanistan, after 30 years [of being away], people said, where are the foreigners? Why are they not here? They'd been suffering under these militias, and to them, foreigners were better than the militias.

## UN leadership, role

The US is a big presence politically. Brahimi left right after the Constitutional Loya Jirga in January 2004. (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)

There were a huge number of vacancies in Iraq and Afghanistan - so we needed to motivate people to go, give them good, respected leadership - so sent de Mistura, and Kai Eide. Paddy Ashdown was put forward before Eide, but he made some statements in a colonial way/tone. Karzai, not entirely incorrectly, felt that was not the right model. So Eide came instead of Ashdown.

(b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)

Washington was supportive of a bigger UN role.

## Political and security priorities, versus vague objectives for reconstruction

Look at DDR and reforming the security institutions, and in the political track, preparations for the constitution and elections. We were able to produce results.

The reconstruction part had occasional meetings, but never had the same level of coordination as the political and security did. I would say the latter had that coordination because we were very interested in them, there were tight timelines to be met - e.g. the loya jirga. On reconstruction, there was not a clear understanding of what we were trying to achieve; no clear objectives; therefore not the resources devoted to a plan; and not good follow up mechanisms. To do the latter, [development people] said, provide me the security and transport.

Reconstruction requires serious thinking - how can we do it better? You need to get the level of analysis right. Maybe coordination is one, but perhaps it's later. First need to define the objectives. What is the USG's economic development arm and what capabilities define that? What is the development mission? and how are we organized to carry out that mission? We don't know what it is. There are conceptual problems *at the highest levels*. If you were to ask President Obama, what is development? He couldn't really tell you. Bush would be even worse! [laughs]

If you want to get bad guys, you work with anyone and everyone to help you do that - even if they

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fundamentally act against your economic goals.

We need something that says, Development consists of these things (a, b, c) happening in sequence. These you do if the UN is with you, these you do if the UN is not with you. Need complex plans, as we have complex war plans. State does not do planning. One of the military's greatest assets is planning.

(b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)

[REDACTED]

## Follow-up Items

None.